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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 63rd MEETING
(FIRST PART)*

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 8 March 1994, at 7 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. van WULFFTEN PALTHE (Netherlands)

later: Mr. NEAGU (Romania)

CONTENTS

Rights of the child, including:

(a) Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

(b) Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children

(c) Programme of Action for the Elimination of the Exploitation of Child Labour

(d) Programme of Action for the Prevention of the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (continued)

* The summary record of the second part of the meeting appears as document E/CN.4/1994/SR.63/Add.1.

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The meeting was called to order at 7.20 p.m.

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, INCLUDING:

(a) STATUS OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

(b) REPORT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SALE OF CHILDREN

(c) PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE ELIMINATION OF THE EXPLOITATION OF CHILD LABOUR

(d) PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE PREVENTION OF THE SALE OF CHILDREN, CHILD PROSTITUTION AND CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

(agenda item 22) (continued) (E/CN.4/1994/82-3, 84 and Add.1, 91, 95 and 114; CRC/C/16, 19 and 20; E/CN.4/1994/NGO/1 and 17; E/CN.4/Sub.2/1993/31 and Add.1)

1. Ms. HAMMARSKJOLD (Observer for Sweden), also speaking on behalf of the other Nordic countries, namely, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway, recalled that the World Conference on Human Rights had reaffirmed the international community's commitment to the rights of the child on the basis of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Nordic countries strongly supported the goal, expressed in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, of achieving universal ratification of the Convention by 1995. There was, however, no intrinsic merit in universal ratification without universal implementation. Full implementation of the Convention by all States parties must be given the highest priority.

2. The persistent evidence of widespread exploitation and abuse of children required urgent attention. In particular, the sexual exploitation of children must be unequivocally condemned and combated. Such violations, as well as the sale of children and the exploitation of child labour, showed a contemptible lack of respect for the inherent dignity of the child. Street children were particularly vulnerable to abuse.

3. The Nordic countries supported the important work of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn, and his recommendations (E/CN.4/1994/84) on action to improve the situation of children in difficult circumstances. The continued deliberations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the economic exploitation of children were awaited with interest.

4. The Nordic Governments believed that the human rights of children, like all human rights, should be fully and equally enjoyed by girls and boys. They therefore welcomed the call by the World Conference on human rights for all human rights work to include a gender perspective and for a stronger protection of the girl-child. It was important that reporting on the rights of the child should make both sexes visible. Problems such as female infanticide and so-called "traditional practices" harmful to the health of girls should be combated more forcefully.

5. If children continued to suffer violations of their rights, it was because the obligations of States in respect of the Convention on the Rights

of the Child were not being fully implemented. Worldwide ratification of the Convention had to be accompanied by measures at the national level to give practical effect to its provisions. National action was crucial. It was not easy to sensitize national administrations to the need for attention to the rights of the child in all decision-making, resource allocation, etc.; the reporting system under the Convention was an important tool in that respect. Many innovative uses could be made of national reports in the promotion of the rights of the child and human rights in general.

6. National measures to fulfil obligations under the Convention should be supported by international cooperation; the Nordic countries fully supported the efforts of UNICEF and other organizations to promote the implementation of the Convention. In the context of bilateral cooperation, the Convention could serve as a frame of reference when devising specific assistance programmes.

7. Human rights were at their most vulnerable in armed conflicts. Children were currently facing appalling physical and psychological suffering in the armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Angola and elsewhere. They were also particularly vulnerable to the effects of certain weapons, such as anti-personnel land-mines. The Nordic countries strongly supported the appointment by the Secretary-General of an expert to study the protection of children in armed conflicts.

8. The Nordic countries deplored the continued exploitation of children as soldiers. The recruitment of children under 15 years of age in conflicts in different parts of the world was frightening proof of the lack of compliance with existing norms of international law. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, every human being under the age of 18 was a child; the age threshold for participation in armed conflicts should therefore be the same. A draft optional protocol to the Convention prepared by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to that end was before the Commission. A draft resolution sponsored by Sweden and Greece proposed the establishment of a group to work on such a protocol. The Nordic countries were prepared to participate actively in such a group.

9. A number of States parties had made reservations to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that were contrary to international law. Reservations incompatible with the Convention's object and purpose were expressly prohibited by article 51 of the Convention. In addition, several reservations contained sweeping references to national law. Such reservations undermined the norms enshrined in the Convention and the competence of the Committee on the Rights of the Child; she welcomed the Committee's decision to address the issue of reservations within the framework of its consideration of the reports of States parties. The Nordic countries would continue to object tc reservations contrary to international law and echoed the appeal by the World Conference to States to withdraw such reservations, some of which were so far-reaching they made a mockery of the act of ratifying the Convention.

10. Since the Committee on the Rights of the child played a pivotal role in ensuring compliance with the Convention, the Nordic countries wished to emphasize that it should have adequate resources to cope with its extremely heavy workload. A large number of initial reports to the Committee were already overdue; States were urged to submit them on time. The thematic

general discussions held by the Committee on children in armed conflicts and on the economic exploitation of children had provided valuable insights into the need for intensified efforts in those areas.

11. The need to improve the situation of children was urgent so that the rights enshrined in the Convention became a reality for all children. All action taken with regard to children must be guided by the best interests of the child itself.

12. Mrs. MULLER (Observer for the Philippines) said that her delegation wished to underline the commitment by the Philippines to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

13. Dire poverty, an expanding population struggling for meagre resources, a breakdown of moral values and the disastrous effects of natural catastrophes were the root causes that prevented the full realization of children's rights. In recognition of the fact that comprehensive responses were required, the Philippine Government was concentrating on poverty alleviation, sustainable development, achievement of peace and security and responsible population management. In addition, programmes for the delivery of basic services were paying particular attention to the special needs of children.

14. The Philippines had been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and one of its foremost experts on social services and children was a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It had submitted its initial report on the Convention to the Committee. Basic legal codes for the protection of children had long been in place in the Philippines. Specific legislation had now been passed to cover health, education and development and the protection of children in especially difficult circumstances.

15. The Philippine Government continued to support and cooperate closely with the work of the Special Rapporteur on sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn. In 1992, the Philippines had adopted Republic Act 7610 to provide for stronger deterrence and special protection of children against abuse, exploitation and discrimination.

16. Her delegation welcomed the information in the Special Rapporteur's report (E/CN.4/1994/84) on moves by countries in Western Europe in respect of criminal acts against children committed by their nationals outside their territories. International cooperation and action at national level were essential to counter the increasing internationalization of crimes against children; it was hoped that other countries would follow suit.

17. Shortly after ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Philippines prepared a Plan of Action for children incorporating the five areas of concern addressed in the Convention. In addition, a massive information campaign on the Convention was launched to raise public awareness and obtain the full cooperation of the people in its implementation. The Philippine Government intended to strengthen further the legislation covering all aspects of children's rights. Government agencies were also working with

local authorities, non-governmental organizations and volunteer groups to implement such laws and to achieve their objective to protect the rights of children, the most vulnerable sector of society.

18. Mr. ALKADHI (Observer for Iraq), recalling the importance placed throughout the United Nations system on the care of children, and the measures, including legal measures, for the protection of children promoted by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, said that Iraq had at all times endeavoured to provide comprehensive protection for children in the social, economic, educational and cultural arenas. Great progress had been made in provision for the welfare of mothers and children and, before the onset of the war of aggression, the protection afforded to children had been at the level of the developed countries.

19. It was unfortunate that despite great scientific and economic progress throughout the world as the twentieth century drew to its close, children were still the victims of war and other forms of pressure in countries such as Iraq, Somalia, Palestine, Bosnia and many African countries.

20. Despite all the lofty principles enunciated in international instruments devoted to the interests of the child, including the 1993 Vienna Declaration, children in Iraq were suffering from the results of the conflict there. The war of aggression launched by the United States of America and its allies against Iraq and the indiscriminate bombing to which the country had been subjected had been devastating for women and children, the most vulnerable groups in society. The use of uranium in rockets by the coalition forces had led to 50,000 child deaths and were likely to lead to more in the future, since a number of cases had been seen of cancer and other diseases earlier unknown in the country. Mines and unexploded bombs were still claiming victims among children. The bombing of water treatment plants and power stations had also led to the deaths of thousands of children.

21. The economic embargo imposed on Iraq for the past three years had severely affected children, women and the elderly, three very vulnerable social groups. In one month in 1993, there had been 5,004 deaths among children under five years of age and 7,226 among those over five. The price of milk and eggs, particularly important in the diet of children, had risen. The embargo was causing psychological and social harm to Iraqi families, and to their children in particular. The number of cases of depression and anxiety among children had risen by 216 per cent. The number of children leaving school had increased as a result of the economic difficulties faced by their families. Iraq was, in fact, being subjected to genocide.

22. Despite the provisions in international human rights instruments, including the protection to be afforded to mothers and children under the 1949 Geneva Convention, a number of countries continued to block Iraqi assets and prevent them being used for the purchase of food and medical supplies. The embargo was being used as a means of exerting pressure, regardless of the suffering it caused to children and their mothers. The Government of Iraq therefore appealed to the Commission to make every effort to stop the deterioration in the situation of children in Iraq so that their right to life might be respected in peace and prosperity.

23. Ms. TOUNSI (Observer for Morocco) said that the horrendous problems facing the world at the close of the century did not spare children. Today, 80 per cent of the victims of armed conflicts were women and children; during the past 10 years two and a half million children had been killed and five million wounded in such conflicts, in some of which they had been combatants. In other areas children were economically exploited, the meagre wages they received for such work often being the main resource of their families. The sale of children occurred in regions where social and economic pressures forced parents to such acts, while child prostitution and pornography affected both developed and developing countries. The sale of children's organs was also a serious problem.

24. The question was how to protect children from such horrifying fates. Although many international instruments existed for the protection of children, from the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), they could have no effect without action by all States to reduce the dangers to which children were exposed.

25. Morocco, which considered the improvement of child welfare to be a priority, had been one of the first signatories of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it had ratified on 21 June 1993. The King of Morocco had also signed, on 3 February 1992, the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, in pursuance of which a coordination committee, representing 15 ministerial departments, had been set up. The Committee had elaborated a plan of action not only in the light of the Declaration but also of other international and national programmes, decisions and guidelines. Morocco had also participated in a number of regional meetings concerned with protection of the child.

26. At the national level, Morocco had made considerable efforts to improve child health and school attendance. There had been a considerable reduction in child mortality, particularly in children under five years of age. Education and human resource development were priorities of national development policy. Considerable work had been done to make primary education available to all children of school age; underprivileged groups such as girls, rural children and the handicapped had been given special attention.

27. Reforms had been introduced in legislation and in the personal status and inheritance rights of children. The authorities and voluntary organizations had also studied the problem of suitable protection for abandoned children. A law had been enacted to allow minors free choice of their guardian, who previously had always been the mother. The National Institute for Law Studies had included in its curriculum a course on children's rights and women's rights as part of a new area of study on human rights. In order to protect the interests of children in particular and the family in general, Morocco was currently considering measures to establish a family council to act as mediator in divorce cases.

28. Since children represented the future of any society, their protection was also the means to ensure its own survival.

29. Mr. MEGALOKONOMOS (Observer for Greece), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the subject of the rights of the child was one of the most important issues before the Commission, since children formed one of the most vulnerable groups in any society. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 was proof of the increasing international commitment to protection and promotion of those rights; it was gratifying that the Convention had so far been ratified by 155 States and it was hoped that universal ratification could be achieved by 1995.

30. The European Union welcomed the positive role of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in ensuring implementation of the Convention at national and international level. It applauded the support given to the Committee by UNICEF and other specialized agencies and welcomed the Committee's collaborative approach to Governments.

31. The Convention provided coordination and structure for the mechanisms and standards for protection of children's rights. The European Union hoped that there would be effective coordination between the work being done by the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and by the Sub-Commission Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery and all other mechanisms, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, to ensure that their work had maximum impact. It called on all States to cooperate with them, to respond fully to their requests and to implement at the national level the relevant programmes of action.

32. The European Union welcomed the prominent role non-governmental organizations had played as advocates for children's rights. In many countries, NGOs had forged powerful coalitions to coordinate action for the well-being of children and to gather and disseminate information about their rights.

33. The European Union was aware of the many root causes in society that placed children in exceptionally difficult circumstances. National and international programmes were needed and political will was required to tackle those causes. It welcomed the call at the World Conference on Human Rights for effective measures against female infanticide, child labour, traffic in children and organs, child exploitation, prostitution and pornography and other forms of sexual abuse. Measures to tackle such abuses had to be identified by all States and translated into action.

34. The European Union continued to be particularly concerned about the widespread phenomenon of street children and the continuing reports of the killing of and violence against such children. It urged all Governments to bring to justice those responsible for offences against street children and to continue to seek comprehensive solutions to their problems. It appreciated the work of non-governmental organizations in that field and pledged its support for their efforts. The fact that resolutions on street children sponsored by it had been adopted by consensus in the General Assembly and the Commission reflected the concern of the international community on the subject. It hoped that a further resolution on the subject sponsored by the European Union under agenda item 22 would receive similarly unanimous support.

35. Another concern was the problem of child abduction. Children should be protected as far as possible from the distress caused by the break-up of their parents - a distress enhanced when a parent abducted a child, often taking him abroad, and thus denying him any opportunity to maintain contact with the other parent. The Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and the European Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions Concerning Custody of Children and on Restoration of Custody of Children could help resolve such situations; their effectiveness would be enhanced as more countries became party to them. When children were abducted to countries that were not parties, the options left to the non-abducting parent were limited, often expensive and usually lengthy. The European Union therefore urged countries to ratify those Conventions as soon as possible and to give serious attention to the problem. In the same context, it continued to be concerned at the suffering of children whose parents had disappeared.

36. The European Union was deeply concerned at the plight of children affected by armed conflict. Not only did those children have to contend with shortage of the basic requirements of life but they were also frequently the victims of weapons of war, or were themselves used as soldiers. Children fleeing armed conflict swelled the ranks of refugees and suffered from the dislocation of their family environment. The European Union therefore endorsed the call by the General Assembly for the Secretary-General to appoint an expert to undertake a study of the question of children in armed conflict.

37. Child labour continued to be a disturbing phenomenon; the adoption of the Programme of Action for the Elimination of the Exploitation of Child Labour was therefore a welcome development. Urgent national efforts and legislative measures were needed to enforce the Programme. The fundamental problems, in particular poverty, underlying that exploitation had to be tackled; international cooperation and national commitment would be needed to face up to the problem.

38. Political will would also be required to confront the traffic in children and children's organs, child prostitution and pornography. There should be no hiding place for those who perpetrated such crimes. However, the roots of the problem were many and complex and frequently lay in material hardship, so that profound social change would be required to eradicate them. Appropriate educational programmes had an important role to play in such change. Sex tourism was a particular problem that would have to be tackled through legislation and other measures both in the countries from which such tourists came and in those they visited.

39. The European Union attached great importance to the rights of the child in developed and developing countries alike. The wide ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was proof that all shared that concern. Only by the exercise of political will and imagination in finding appropriate corrective measures would it be possible to address all the problems faced by a most vulnerable group, which was also the world's single most valuable asset.

40. Mr. GONZALEZ de LINARES (Observer for Spain) said that the statement made by the previous speaker, on behalf of the European Union, had reflected all the basic points his delegation had wished to make under the current agenda

item. Therefore, in a desire to help the Commission to make up for some of the delay arising from the workload of the current session, his delegation would refrain from making its customary statement. He would like the record of the current meeting to reflect his delegation's decision and indicate that the text of its statement was available for all those interested.

41. Ms. MANN (World Organization Against Torture) said that her organization applauded the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Children's rights, however, continued to be grossly violated in all parts of the world. Children were the first to suffer the effects of repression, extreme poverty and structural adjustment. They were also often the victims of torture, directly or indirectly. In one instance, in Colombia, three young children had seen their mother being tortured to death in their own home by army personnel. Street children, too, often suffered from sexual or other forms of torture, and were sometimes killed in cold blood as part of "social cleansing" operations; one dreadful example was the massacre of seven children in Rio de Janeiro in July 1993. Many children were victims of bonded labour, often working in appalling conditions for little or no pay. Many were exploited for prostitution or pornography, and there was growing evidence to suggest the existence of a market for children's organs.

42. Another particularly serious abuse was the recruitment of children into armed forces or groups. Contrary to article 38, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and article 77 of Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, tens of thousands of children below the minimum age limit of 15 years were involved in armed conflicts throughout the world. The report of the Special Rapporteur (E/CN.4/1994/84) had identified 24 wars, both civil and international, in which children were known to have been involved. In some cases, children were forcibly recruited; in others, they enlisted because they had no other means of subsistence. Thousands of children had thus been used in the Islamic Republic of Iran during the war with Iraq, inter alia as "human shields" or for minefield clearance. Children had also been recruited into armed conflicts in Myanmar, Liberia, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique, the Sudan, Guatemala, El Salvador, Peru and the former Yugoslavia; that list was not exhaustive. Children thus suffered not only death, wounds and the trauma of battle but also the long-term effects of a climate of violence, as had been seen, for example, in the "lost generations" in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, Israel and the Israeli-occupied territories. The protection and rehabilitation of such children and those held in prison camps was paramount; but the essential aim should be the prevention and prohibition of such situations.

43. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, at its third session, had requested the Secretary-General to call on States parties to the Convention, and parties involved in armed conflicts, to raise the minimum age of recruitment from 15 to 18 years. The proposal had received further support in part II, paragraph 50 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and in the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session. The World Organization Against Torture strongly supported the proposal. It also urged the Commission, at its current session, to establish a working group to draw up an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to raise the minimum age of recruitment in armed forces to 18 years.

44. Ms. BUWALDA (International Association for the Defence of Religious Liberty) said that child prostitution was a growing worldwide problem. A Norwegian Government report to the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery had estimated that 1 million children a year were forced into the sex market; the Brazilian Centre for Children and Adolescents estimated that 500,000 children were involved in prostitution in Brazil; official estimates placed the number of child prostitutes in Viet Nam at over 40,000; and the organization End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism estimated that there were 200,000 to 300,000 child prostitutes in Thailand, 100,000 in Taiwan and the Philippines, and 30,000 in Sri Lanka. An alarming growth in numbers had also been recorded in Africa, North America and Europe. The scope of child prostitution ranged from individual cases to organized crime, and involved traffic in children for brothels, individual clients and paedophile organizations. Thousands of women and children were smuggled from China, Laos and Burma to brothels in Thailand.

45. Child prostitution and sexual exploitation of children must be viewed as a worldwide crime against humanity, to be combated through international cooperation. Although over 120 States had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the problem of child prostitution was growing. Most countries had laws to protect children from sexual exploitation, but many Governments seemed lax about enforcing them. Tourism was one area in which law-enforcement agencies should be better equipped and trained to identify and deal with child prostitution. Countries should introduce laws enabling them to prosecute their nationals and residents for sex offences against children committed abroad; few countries currently implemented such measures. Practical steps to curb such abuses called for coordinated policies involving the judiciary, the police and the community at large. And severer penalties, such as long custodial sentences and confiscation of the property and earnings of those who exploited children, would be a more effective deterrent. Judges, social workers and legislators, as well as the general public, needed to be better informed about such practices. Governments should take appropriate action, including full support of police forces in dealing with the problem; international pressure should be applied against Governments which failed to do so. Strategies to improve education and combat poverty, as well as programmes of prevention and post-prostitution care for children, should also be implemented.

46. The United Nations should give immediate priority to eliminating child prostitution, devote further resources to that issue including assistance to countries where appropriate, implement programmes to combat child prostitution, create practical mechanisms to ensure accession by States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, focus international pressure on countries which failed to take effective action, and declare that the sexual exploitation of children was a crime against humanity.

47. Ms. BRETT (Friends World Committee for Consultation) said that a recent survey suggested that children were currently involved in government or opposition armed forces in 38 countries. Her organization, at its 1979 Triennial Meeting, had expressed its abhorrence of the widespread involvement of children in military training and armed conflicts, and had since campaigned for international efforts to reduce and eventually eliminate the use of children in armed forces. It warmly welcomed the attention given

to the issue by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, by the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, and at the World Conference on Human Rights. Of the 188 countries listed in the appendix to the study Child soldiers prepared for the Henry Dunant Institute, only 9 had a legal age of conscription below 18 years; yet the Convention on the Rights of the Child set the minimum at 15 years. It was time, therefore, for the international norm to be aligned with the majority of national standards. In that regard, her organization welcomed the recommendation concerning an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and urged the Commission to establish an open-ended working group to draft one. But that alone would not solve the problem. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, when examining reports from States parties to the Convention, should look into the law and practice of States relating to recruitment and voluntary enlistment, and should be encouraged to investigate alleged violations.

48. It was not hard to understand the frustration, voiced by a number of delegations at the Commission's current session, felt by Governments held solely responsible for human rights violations in conflicts with opposition groups. It must be recognized, however, that Governments could not evade their own responsibilities by laying the blame on others, particularly in situations to which humanitarian law would apply if the Government accepted them as non-international armed conflicts and thereby involved opposition groups in the responsibility. The question of "third-party effect" regarding the involvement of children in armed conflicts could be given further consideration in the context of the recommended optional protocol; pending its adoption, States and non-State groups should be urged to declare unilaterally that they would not recruit persons under 18 years of age into their armed forces, and to ensure compliance with such an undertaking.

49. The Henry Dunant Institute study on child soldiers revealed many reasons, in addition to coercion, why children became involved in armed conflicts. They included a desire for adventure or revenge, ideology, reward, security, peer-group pressure or a means of subsistence. Many of the factors were not susceptible to legal solutions. Therefore, Quakers welcomed the General Assembly's request to the Secretary-General, in resolution 48/157, to appoint an expert to undertake a comprehensive study and make specific recommendations on ways and means to prevent children from being affected by armed conflicts. It was hoped that the Commission would give further consideration to that matter at its fifty-first session, as invited by the General Assembly.

50. In the decade to 1991, over 1.5 million children had been killed in wars, and over 4 million physically disabled. According to UNHCR estimates, over 10 million children were currently refugees. Such statistics, and the attendant psychological and social implications, reflected a situation which the international community could not afford to ignore.

51. Ms. JEANMOND (International Federation Terre des Hommes) said that, although the street was not the natural place for a child's development, it was where roughly 100 million children throughout the world were compelled to live. The causes of the phenomenon of street children were more or less the same everywhere, and hard to eradicate: poverty, unemployment, break-up of families, population displacement and failure of social services. Lacking

education, and having to survive as best they could, such children were exposed to malnutrition, disease, drugs, prostitution and crime. But they kept the vital faculties of childhood; they simply lacked a future.

52. The phenomenon was not unknown in Europe. Gangs of young thieves existed in Budapest; in Bucharest, children begged and sniffed glue in the streets; in Ireland, there were said to be between 500 and 1,000 street children aged between 15 and 18 years; and there were estimated to be between 100 and 200 such children in Finland.

53. In Abidjan, there were said to be some 14,000 street children aged between 7 and 18 years, some 5,000 of them having neither family nor home. In Tegucigalpa, a study of street children showed that they were all the victims of broken families; only 5 per cent of them were really orphans. Their ages ranged from 4 to 18 years; they begged, performed menial tasks or took to crime. They suffered from poor hygiene and a higher than normal incidence of disease.

54. Her organization was extremely concerned about the violence against street children in Colombia, where they were dubbed "social undesirables" and often attacked by armed groups. Children were being wiped out not only in the major cities but increasingly in the smaller towns. They were generally the victims of "death squads", which sometimes acted with the complicity of the national police and local businesses. It was estimated that, in Bogotá alone, three to four children on average were killed each day.

55. Her organization was well aware that the requisite solution involved many economic factors and called for more than mere good will on the part of States. But the latter could at least be urged to avoid complicity in the systematic killing of children, and to bring to justice those guilty of such acts. Although it was that such deeds were being perpetrated only in a few countries, the number could grow swiftly unless the international community resolutely faced up to the problem, the solution of which required the collaboration of all sectors of society.

56. Mr. CUNNIAH (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) said that his organization was pleased to note that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been ratified and acceded to by 152 States as at 26 October 1993. But recognition of that international instrument seemed not to have been translated into a genuine commitment in practice. According to ILO figures, over 100 million children under the age of 15 years were working - a gross abuse of internationally recognized rights of the child. The ILO standards fixing the general minimum age for admission to work at 15 years, with higher limits in case of hazardous and dangerous occupations, fully accorded with article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. And in the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, established by ILO in 1991, both sides of industry were called on to combat the use and abuse of child labour. His organization deemed active trade-union participation a key factor in combating and eliminating child labour.

57. Since the ILO Minimum Age Convention had come into force in 1976, many countries had introduced substantial legislation relating to children's employment. In some areas, however, such as the informal sector, domestic

service and agriculture, the employment of children was not covered; children could also be found working in industries such as glass, textiles and firework manufacturing. It was a matter of deep concern that, in many countries, child labour laws were unenforced or circumvented by multinational corporations and foreign manufacturers.

58. Total reliance on legal instruments alone would not, of course, eliminate the exploitation of child labour. Various economic, social and cultural factors had a direct bearing on the phenomenon. In a number of developing countries, for instance, children provided the desperately needed income of poor families. Other factors included inadequacies in public education systems. Therefore, child labour should be considered in the broader framework of social and economic policies. The most effective solution was free access to basic education; according to UNICEF, the number of child workers was considerably lower where the primary education system was accessible.

59. One example which highlighted the problem of child labour was the carpet industry. In India, Pakistan and Nepal, it was estimated that between 50 and 70 per cent of the carpet industry workforce was under the age of 14. In India 300,000 children were believed to work in that industry, in Pakistan 500,000, and in Nepal 200,000. The working conditions were hazardous to health, and in general children could be more easily exploited than adults. Thus, in many cases, the irony was that children were working while their parents were unemployed. ICFTU was working very closely with several NGOs in the region towards the labelling of carpets not produced by children and the launching of an international consumer boycott of carpets made by them. Employers who exploited children did so because there were no strong government measures to prevent them; public opinion, therefore, played a key role in the campaign.

60. Child labour was the most pernicious and repulsive form of child exploitation. Governments should support the ICFTU demand for a social clause denying market access to goods produced by child labour, to be inserted in the final package of the GATT Agreements in April 1994. He also called on Governments which had not yet done so to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Labour Organisation Minimum Age for Employment Convention, No. 138, as a matter of priority. Further, he asked the Commission to impress on all Governments the need to implement the recommendations contained in the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, adopted at the World Summit for Children in 1990. Governments should also develop activities directed towards increasing family awareness of children's rights and promoting economic and social policies against widespread poverty and underdevelopment, which constituted the root causes of child labour.

61. Ms. SPALDING (International Association of Educators for World Peace) said that her association had for many years been concerned with serious issues affecting children, often said to result from economic or social deprivation, ranging from child labour and child prostitution to the genital mutilations of the girl child and the problems of children with disabilities. A new issue had arisen, however: that of the removal of organs from children. The time was past for dismissing such allegations as some sort of

propaganda or misinformation campaign. Following the report of the Sub-Commission Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1993/30) and the recent report to the Commission by the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children (E/CN.4/1994/84), the concern being expressed by a growing number of Governments and non-governmental organizations should be met by undertaking an in-depth inquiry, with appropriate technical support, into the allegations on the matter.

62. Since the beginning of the fiftieth session, 20 non-governmental organizations had signed a working draft resolution drawn up by her Association concerning the removal of organs from children. It had been increasingly suggested what was needed was not a new special rapporteur, but more technical assistance for the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children: a specialist or team of specialists could be engaged and could submit their findings to him.

63. She made a personal appeal to each person in the room, and the circles of influence they represented, to say "no". It was not acceptable that children - or adults - should have organs or other life substances removed for sale to another person. It was a hideously exploitative business venture and, indeed, a heinous crime against humanity, to which all present would be accomplices, if it was truly taking place. It was time to settle the nagging allegations one way or the other. If after serious inquiry they were found to be untrue, the issue should be removed from the Commission's agenda. If they were true, however, the Commission should confront them with all its moral fibre and eliminate the practice from the face of the earth.

64. Mr. BANDIER (International Association of Educators for World Peace) said that he would leave the current session with a feeling of profound disillusionment, thinking of the fate of children all over the world who were undergoing terrible suffering, both moral and physical, and who would ultimately meet a wretched death; yet their lives could have been so fine if unscrupulous individuals had not, on some pretext of their own or for what they claimed were reasons of State, engaged in unconsidered and violent acts. He had in mind particularly children, those eternal innocent victims, but also women, who truly gave birth to what might still be called humanity.

65. It was heart-rending that in a world which called itself civilized children were dying every day, deprived of the sacred right to live in peace and happiness. Children's eyes were filled with tears when they should be enjoying the beauties of nature and he wondered whether the leaders of the world had forgotten that they too had been children, indeed still were children, but with a gloss of education. He wondered what was happening in a world which had gone topsy-turvy, where human values had disintegrated, and he ventured the opinion that amid the welter of rights laid down in innumerable international instruments the simple concept of duty had been forgotten. It had been suggested that the concept was covered by the term "obligations". To that his response was that an obligation constituted a constraint, whereas a duty had a spiritual foundation; and such a distinction could be understood only if a new definition was given to the term "education" - which was not to be confused with instruction - at a universal level which could give some

meaning back to true human values. Although he was himself in his eighties, he hoped that he would find kindred spirits who would help to realize his dreams for the future of the world's children.

66. Mr. Neagu (Romania) took the Chair.

67. Ms. BLOEM (World Federation of Methodist Women), speaking on behalf of 19 non-governmental organizations*, many of which were members of the Geneva-based Working Group on the Girl Child, expressed concern that although there had been improvements for women and the girl child since the 1985 Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, girls still had unequal access to education, nutrition and health, and suffered discrimination. In many countries girls had a lower status than boys. Such inequality became increasingly difficult to overcome and its effects continued into adult life. Discrimination against women was cumulative: a malnourished, uneducated girl child was likely to become a malnourished, uneducated woman, unable to make her needed contribution to sustainable development. Improving the status of the girl child would therefore be a major factor in the elimination of poverty.

68. It was essential that the status of the girl child was fully recognized by the Commission and that the pledges and commitments relating to the girl child made in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Summit for Children and the World Conference on Human Rights should be implemented. Governments should take measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against girl children, ensuring equal access to nutrition, health and education; to give support to parents, thus reducing the economic, social and political pressures which led to child prostitution and pornography, the traffic in organs and other forms of economic and sexual exploitation; to recognize that girls in particular were the victims of physical, sexual and mental abuse, within the family and in society as a whole; and to establish appropriate mechanisms to provide assistance to victims, with the ultimate aim of eliminating such abuse. Governments should also be aware of the harmful traditional practices affecting the health and well-being of girls and should attend to the specific needs of girls in all vulnerable groups, particularly among refugees, migrants and those in areas of armed conflict.

69. Ms. de ESCORCIA (Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Central America (CODEHUCA)) said that although the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been ratified by Central American Governments millions of children in that continent lived precarious and degrading lives. The main reasons were the policies of marginalization, exacerbated by economic measures imposed at the expense of social programmes, and having harmful consequences particularly for the weakest groups, namely, children. There were many who lived by scavenging on rubbish dumps, children without a roof over their heads, children without education, family or welfare. Those that had a family were obliged to work at an early age to augment the family income, thus adding to the truancy and illiteracy figures and increasing the numbers of child

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* The list of non-governmental organizations concerned appears as annex I of this summary record.

beggars. Other common phenomena were physical and sexual abuse of children, abduction, fraudulent and illegal adoption, child prostitution, child victims of war and traffic in organs.

70. Her organization wished to draw attention to a number of particularly disturbing aspects of children's lives in Central America. First, with regard to child mortality, she said that the inadequacy of health and social programmes was such that more than 90,000 children died a year. Worse still, most of those deaths were caused by preventable illnesses, such as diarrhoea, dengue, measles, chickenpox and respiratory diseases. One in 10 children died before the age of five.

71. Illiteracy was on the rise. Family obligations forced children to work, to beg or, unfortunately, to turn to crime. In countries like Costa Rica, which claimed a high level of education, the education budget was falling. As for illegal adoption and the sale of children, she said that poverty made many parents unable to feed their families. Central America had therefore become a paradise for prospective adoptive parents from Europe and North America, who were prepared to pay thousands of dollars for a child. The director of Casa Alianza, a humanitarian organization for the defence of street children in Latin America, had said with reference to Guatemala that a foreigner could obtain a child for between US$ 20,000 and $25,000, depending on the colour and age of the baby. White children were more expensive, whereas indigenous children were valued at between $10,000 and $15,000. Such adoptions were mainly a legal subterfuge to conceal the fact that the children were actually being sold. In many cases, however, it had become a lucrative trade for middlemen who encouraged women to bear children for the express purpose of selling them. The thousands of dollars, meanwhile, went to the middleman, not to the parents.

72. The sale of organs was another disgraceful practice which was also unfortunately becoming more common and lucrative. Children were abducted or sold for their organs. In Honduras, two children disappeared every day and were seldom recovered, lost in the murky world of adoption and sale. In Guatemala a government department had revealed that there was strong evidence that the organs of Guatemalan children were being exported for the purpose of transplantation in children in developed countries.

73. Turning to the question of abuse of authority vis-à-vis children, she said that street children, in particular, suffered constant persecution and violence at the hands of the security authorities. In November 1993 a Honduran organization had reported that three 14-year-old boys had been tortured by the police and that during their eight-day detention they had seen a nine-year-old boy also being tortured. In Guatemala, in August 1993, four plain-clothes policemen had beaten up three boys in the street. In Costa Rica, a child who was the leader of a gang of street children had been arbitrarily killed by agents of the legal investigation department. In Nicaragua, in September 1993, on the orders of the mayor of Managua, dozens of children were beaten up by the police.

74. Institutionalized violence against the child population went even further: boys were forced to join the armed forces. The most glaring example was that of Guatemala, where 15-year-old boys had to join civilian

self-defence patrols (PACs). The commanding officer of the area had acknowledged that there was no age limit and that hundreds of children served in the patrols. Furthermore, in March 1993, nine boys had been wounded by the Guatemalan army to prevent them fleeing with their parents to Mexico.

75. Poverty encouraged unscrupulous people to exploit children for profit. The most common form of exploitation was sexual, in the form of pornography and prostitution. Children who begged or otherwise drew attention to themselves were most at risk, and girls, naturally, more than boys. The number of under-age mothers was constantly on the rise. Sexual exploitation and poverty was closely linked with a rise in child drug addiction. Many children were used in drug trafficking and others were addicted themselves, like the 11-year-old living in a San Salvador park, who sniffed glue at mealtimes instead of eating. Her organization appealed to the international community to put pressure on all States to comply with their international obligations, particularly with regard to respect for children's rights.

76. Ms. BRUCE (International Catholic Child Bureau), speaking on behalf of 10 non-governmental organizations*, most of which were members of the NGO subgroup on sexual exploitation, said that the subgroup had examined the way in which 21 States had reported on the implementation of the Programme of Action on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. She noted that most of the responses, except for one or two notably frank contributions, covered only the area of legal action. Yet that was only a small part of the Programme, which took a comprehensive approach to the issue and urged action in the field of education, information, training, coordination and social measures. States should be encouraged to report on all aspects of implementing the Programme, not just to list the legislation on their statute books.

77. The report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (E/CN.4/1994/84) had provided a wealth of information and an important analysis of how the issues of the sale of children and sexual exploitation were being dealt with around the world. Her organization particularly supported his recommendation concerning the need for an independent monitoring body at the national level to seek out reliable information, to recommend a national strategy on the sale of children and sexual exploitation and to translate international law into national programmes.

78. In 1993 the Committee on the Rights of the Child had organized a very successful theme day on the economic exploitation of children. For that one day the Committee had become the international focal point for the issue. Almost every United Nations specialized agency had been represented, as well as non-governmental organizations. Such a meeting of minds and hearts was extremely rare at international level and had been worth the effort. It pointed in the direction the world should be taking to bring about real change for children.

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* The list of non-governmental organizations concerned appears as annex II of this summary record.

79. The United Nations now had an impressive body of knowledge regarding both the problem and some of the solutions. The challenge was to know how to manage that knowledge. The non-governmental organizations co-sponsoring her statement were of the opinion that the need was not for more standard-setting instruments, but for a high-level forum where existing instruments could be implemented through improved international cooperation. Their proposal was to link the need for greater dialogue with the Sub-Commission's proposal to create a new group within the Commission, to be concerned with contemporary forms of slavery (to replace the existing Sub-Commission Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery). The group could consider the new proposals currently being circulated on the sale and sexual exploitation of children and decide how best to encourage the implementation of existing mechanisms. A high-level group of committed individuals could create new ways of harnessing the current moral outrage against child prostitution and transforming it into a coherent strategy to eliminate gross violations of the rights of the child.

80. Ms. PARKER (International Educational Development) said that there was growing evidence that the drug AZT should not be used for asymptomatic people testing HIV-positive. Its alleged efficacy was based entirely on trials in the United States in 1986. The mortality data from that trial had, however, been discredited and the trial had been abruptly terminated. Since then several studies had shown that more deaths occurred among people given AZT than among those given a placebo. Yet a number of European countries, led by the United Kingdom, planned to carry out testing of AZT on babies and young children born to asymptomatic mothers. The trial, partially funded by the European Community, had been strongly denounced, both in the British House of Commons and by a group of over 150 experienced scientists who believed that the HIV-AIDS hypothesis, and the use of AZT, lacked scientific credibility.

81. Her organization was also concerned at growing reports of the forced sterilization of under-age girls, both in Tibet and in Maluku, which was occupied by Indonesia. In both cases it was clear that the motivation was genocidal, with no medical justification. In Maluku forced sterilization was coupled with attempts to erase Moluccan culture by eliminating all references to Moluccan history in schools, discouraging the use of traditional dress and changing place-names from the Moluccan to the Indonesian language.

82. In Bhutan children were being punished for the beliefs of their parents, especially since the beginning of the human rights and democracy movement in that country. Schools in southern Bhutan had been closed and converted to army barracks. In order for children to be admitted to the remaining schools, they had to have a "no objection certificate", issued by the army or the police, verifying that their parents were not involved with human rights. Few children qualified. Moreover, many children were denied their nationality as the result of a retroactive implementation of the 1985 citizenship law, which required both parents to be Bhutanese for Bhutanese-born children to acquire citizenship.

83. Moroccan children had also suffered because of the beliefs of their parents, notably those of a former minister. Following his suicide in 1972 his children, aged 10 to 18, had been detained for 19 years. Meanwhile, children in Bougainville born after 1989 had not received any of the basic immunizations owing to the blockade of the island. A system that had

previously provided comprehensive basic medical care, adequate sanitation and hygiene had almost completely collapsed. Mothers died in childbirth; newly born children died of preventable conditions. Aid sent from abroad was not allowed into the country. Many children had been forced to flee into the jungles or caves. Sometimes only contaminated water was available and malnutrition was on the increase. The blockade of Bougainville should be ended through decisive action by the Commission.

84. Medical experimentation with children, and the medical abuse of children, exemplified both by such cases and by the situation of organ transplants showed a growing and abominable trend. The rights of children should be considered in an integrated way, taking in all the available mechanisms of the United Nations human rights system. She urged all rapporteurs to include the situation of children in their reports. She appealed specially to the new High Commissioner for Human Rights to use his good offices to deal with situations involving children.

85. Mrs. MIRBAHA (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, while the fact that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had now been ratified by 155 States was encouraging, it did not necessarily point to an improvement in the situation of children, millions of whom around the world were faced with poverty, economic crisis, hunger, homelessness, disease, war and violence. According to the latest report of the World Bank, over 180 million children - one in every three - suffered from acute malnutrition, with twice as many girls as boys affected; and that number would increase to 600 million by the end of the century. The major factors that had led to that situation were soaring population growth and the lack of justice and equality in global distribution and consumption of foodstuffs.

86. A great deal of attention had been given to the rights of children at the World Conference on Human Rights, and for the first time representatives of children from all over the world had participated in such an event and had discussed their own rights. As the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights had noted at the Conference, the relatively new notion that children had particular rights had gained wide acceptance since the adoption of the Convention, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had made valuable contributions to the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as had the International Labour Organisation, the World Health Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme. However, further serious steps should be taken towards meaningful implementation of the Convention and the allocation of the resources needed to meet its objectives. The World Conference had also called for the strengthening of mechanisms to secure children's rights. Coordination and cooperation among the various organizations working for the rights of children would further strengthen their activities, as well as reducing the risk of duplication.

87. Given the importance of regional cooperation and the near-universal ratification of the Convention, her Government urged other countries to join in a truly global action plan for children. Following the example of the successful regional cooperation of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation and the Organization of African Unity, the 10 member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) - 7 of which had ratified the

Convention - had met in Tehran in January 1994 to explore approaches towards cooperation for the promotion of child survival, child protection and child development in the ECO region. In an interdependent world in which issues had repercussions beyond national borders, it was the collective responsibility of the international community to ensure that the spirit of the Convention was kept alive and its articles purposefully implemented and meaningfully incorporated into the everyday life of families and communities. The Islamic Republic of Iran was among those countries that had prepared a national plan of action with regard to the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, for implementation. Family values and religious and cultural norms based on Islamic guidance and principles had provided a secure environment for training and teaching children in all fields of physical, psychological, moral and social health, and had safeguarded their rights in all dimensions.

88. A happy child should have good housing, sufficient food, and adequate health and medical care and education. According to UNICEF, the financial cost of protecting children against childhood diseases, reducing the rate of malnutrition, making family planning services universally available and providing children with at least a basic education was substantially lower than that of many individual economic projects currently in place in various countries around the world. Development could be achieved only if priority was given to the needs and rights of children; and where Governments showed the political will, efficiency, experience and social awareness, all those goals were achievable.

89. Mr. PEREZ NOVOA (Cuba) said that the rights of the child must be the subject of the most scrupulous attention by the Commission if monstrous practices such as the sale of children and their organs, child prostitution and child pornography were to be eradicated. For that reason, his delegation had already expressed its concern at the insufficient time allocated to agenda item 22, a concern it now wished to reiterate, in the hope that the item would be accorded the time and attention it deserved at the next session of the Commission.

90. His delegation noted with concern that, in spite of the commitments made at the World Summit for Children three years previously, the sale of children and their organs, child prostitution and child pornography were assuming alarming proportions. The internationalization of those phenomena constituted a major challenge to the United Nations in its attempts to promote and protect human rights. The Commission was now debating that section of human society which represented the hope for the future: the generations who would one day inhabit a world free of injustice and human rights violations and who would judge the present generation's efforts and willingness to put an end to such inhuman practices. That commitment to future generations must guide the debates and activities of the Commission.

91. The solution lay in a joint and comprehensive attack on the root causes of those phenomena, which were enumerated in detail in the report of the Special Rapporteur (E/CN.4/1994/84). However, merely to adopt laws, sign conventions and approve resolutions was not enough: there must also be a political will to promote real and effective international cooperation to enable the countries of the South and the North to attack those root causes

together; for most victims of such atrocities lived in the South, while the beneficiaries of those practices lived in the North. Nor was it a secret that the legislation of the civilized societies of western Europe encouraged the commercialization of transplants, thereby providing an incentive for a market in children's organs. The social climate resulting from the unbridled consumerism that prevailed in the developed countries, together with the grave problems generated by poverty in the underdeveloped world, claimed millions of child victims every year. Travel agencies promoting sexual tourism for paedophiles, a market for children's corneas and kidneys, illegal adoptions, the exploitation of children as cheap labour - all these were on the increase, and precious little was being done to prevent them. The report of the Special Rapporteur contained alarming figures on the numbers of children working illegally in the United Kingdom, a 250 per cent increase in violations of child labour legislation in the United States, the numbers of missing children in Western Europe, the "flesh trade" in Belgium, and the trade of women and girls to Japan, the unfortunate consequences of which included torture and death. Such practices had devastating consequences for the victims, whose only sin was innocence and the desire to survive in conditions that daily threatened their lives.

92. Yet the action taken by the United Nations in the fight against those evils fell far short of expectations. In the light of the evidence unearthed by the Special Rapporteur, it was uncomprehensible, indeed inconceivable, that he should be denied the resources necessary to carry out his programme of visits, when resources were allocated to projects with lower priority such as the setting up of a working group on the involvement of children in armed conflicts - a worthy issue - but one with less sweeping implications for the daily lives of children throughout the world.

93. For those reasons, his delegation strongly supported the initiative by the Latin American group to create a working group to study the drafting of guidelines for a draft protocol on questions related to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, as well as the basic measures needed to prevent and eliminate those problems.

94. Mr. ZAHRAN (Observer for Egypt) said that Egypt had been one of the first countries to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and had submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in October 1992. Egypt had accorded particular attention to children in its development plans and projects, and had also set up many schools, kindergartens and libraries for children, in the belief that investment in children's education was an investment in the future. Literacy projects had been adopted, providing children with the opportunity to learn to read and write, and offering prizes as an incentive for them to expand their knowledge and develop their moral and mental outlook.

95. Egyptian law protected children from exploitation, prohibiting those under the age of 12 from working, so as to allow them to develop naturally and receive a basic education. Adolescents were also prohibited from working in certain jobs and industries that might endanger their health; and employers were required to permit them to undergo regular medical examinations. The working day was fixed at six hours, and employers infringing those regulations were liable to sanctions.

96. A working group had recently prepared a new bill regulating the rights of children and their protection in the social, educational, health and employment fields. The minimum working age was to be raised to 14, full protection extended by one year to cover those up to the age of 18, and heavier fines imposed on employers who failed to comply with the regulations.

97. His delegation wished to thank the Committee on the Rights of the Child for its continuing efforts to secure international cooperation in improving the protection of children's rights in the growing number of States that had ratified the Convention, and congratulated the Committee on the dialogue it had established with States. Egypt attentively followed developments in the Committee's cooperation with other specialized United Nations bodies, the financial institutions and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, and commended its recourse to INTERPOL expertise to halt the illegal sale of children and their organs. It welcomed the forthcoming seminar to be organized jointly by the Centre for Human Rights and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on coordination of human rights protection within the United Nations system. States that had not yet ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child should do so forthwith, so as to secure universal accession by 1995.

98. The International Year of the Family would provide an opportunity to elucidate the linkages between children and the family, as the surest means of protecting them from exploitation and guaranteeing them an education. Those activities would be reflected in the work of the United Nations Conference on Population to be hosted by Egypt in Cairo in September 1994.

99. Mr. DÉGUÈNE KA (Observer for Senegal) said that the swiftness with which the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been ratified by almost all countries, including his own, was partly attributable to the fact that all civilizations shared the same love for children and devoted the same attention to their development. Moreover, children constituted the future of the community. However, despite the universal awareness of the need to protect children, the reports submitted showed that children continued to be disadvantaged and vulnerable, and were sometimes simply abandoned to their fate. The plight of millions of children continued to be a reproach to the conscience of humanity. A multitude of binding legal instruments were in force, covering the minimum age for employment, recruitment of children into the armed forces, and international adoption. Yet neither those, nor the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924, nor the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted in 1959, had been able to eradicate the exploitation and ill-treatment of children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was thus the cornerstone of the system for international protection of children in the modern world.

100. Yet, over and above the problem of application of the various international legal instruments, the time had surely come to consider the underlying reasons for the persistence of certain wrongs suffered by children. It was evident that there was a very close interrelationship between the specific problems of children and the general problems of the populations or societies in which they lived. In many countries, the suffering of children, far from being the consequence of a lack of legal protection, often merely reflected the poverty and destitution of the families in which they lived.

In Africa, for example, the phenomenon of street children was on the increase, and the young unemployed were the first victims of drugs, prostitution and other forms of trafficking. Decisive preventive measures must thus be taken as a matter of urgency, in order to halt those afflictions, which fell most heavily on children. To that end, international cooperation must be intensified. Without a policy for coordinated and effective assistance, implementation of the provisions of the Convention would be beyond the capacities of a number of countries. In that regard, he wished to acknowledge the continuing efforts made by UNICEF, particularly in Africa, where its campaigns to meet children's primary health needs had achieved satisfactory results.

101. But, while appropriate responses to phenomena such as homelessness, malnutrition and illiteracy were linked to the economic capacities of individual countries, it was totally unacceptable, as the twentieth century drew to a close, that the world community should continue to tolerate the sale of children or of their organs. Every available means must be used to eliminate those barbaric and intolerable practices. The recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children must not remain pious intentions, but must lead to concrete measures on the part of individual countries and the international community aimed at stamping out those practices once and for all. In that regard, he drew attention to a conference of ministers of French-speaking countries responsible for children, convened in Dakar in July 1993, the main purpose of which had been to propose and implement specific measures to improve, organize and consolidate the system for protection and education of children.

102. In reaffirming his country's commitment to promoting the rights of the child, his delegation wished to stress the importance it attached to the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the reports of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and the programmes of action on the protection of children adopted by the Commission. It had expressed its solidarity with that cause by sponsoring all the draft resolutions relating to the rights of the child.

103. Mr. SANDERS (International Lesbian and Gay Association) said that the issue of the rights of the child was of special concern to lesbians and gay men, for three major reasons. First, one of the accusations most often made against gay men in the past had been that they were paedophiles or child molesters. The position of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) on paedophilia had been questioned in the months since it had gained consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, and he therefore wished clearly to restate his organization's position on that issue.

104. Paedophilia was not specifically a homosexual issue: most instances of paedophilia that came to public, police or clinical attention were heterosexual. There was no scientific basis for asserting that paedophilia was any more common among homosexuals than among heterosexuals. Any association of paedophilia with gay males was therefore unscientific prejudice. At its 1990 Annual Assembly in Stockholm, ILGA had passed a general resolution opposing paedophilia as exploiting age and power differences. In ILGA's view, every child had the right to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, including protection from prostitution and

involvement in pornography. That debate within ILGA had been necessary because one of its member organizations was NAMBLA - the North American Man-Boy Love Association. The position taken by ILGA against paedophilia had been bitterly attacked by NAMBLA in its Bulletin. Although the positions of NAMBLA and ILGA had clearly and publicly been in conflict, NAMBLA had not withdrawn from membership of ILGA, thus creating confusion in the minds of some about the exact position of ILGA. In order to secure consistency with ILGA's 1990 resolution, its executive was asking the membership to expel any pro-paedophile organizations from ILGA at the June 1994 Annual Assembly. The expulsion of those organizations would end any confusion on that issue.

105. Secondly, a number of issues arose concerning custody, access, adoption and alternative insemination. Lesbians and gay men often suffered discrimination in those areas. It was fairly common for lesbians and gay men to have children, either from previous marriages or through the use of alternative insemination techniques. It was a terrible experience for lesbians and gay men to find that their custody of or access to children had been challenged, and that the question whether they were suitable parents would be judged by administrative or judicial authorities; for in the past, such judgements had often been blatantly discriminatory, although attitudes were now changing in many parts of the world. Needless to say, his organization's membership was concerned with the best interests of the child: studies to date showed that children raised in homosexual family units were no more likely to be homosexual than children raised in heterosexual family units. Since almost all homosexuals were raised in heterosexual families, that should come as no surprise at all. In the interests of ending discrimination against lesbians and gay men, it was unacceptable to use existing discriminatory attitudes in order to deny homosexuals rights of access, custody, adoption or alternative insemination.

106. Thirdly, his organization knew from experience how important it was for children to be able to develop and explore their own sexuality without fear, and with access to adequate information about the different forms of sexual expression that existed in society. In 1989, a United States Government report on youth suicide had concluded that young lesbians and gays were two to three times more likely than other people to attempt suicide, because they faced a hostile and condemning environment, verbal and physical abuse, and rejection and isolation from families and peers. The report had made it clear that discriminatory attitudes were the cause of great stress for young lesbians and gays. It had called for an end to discrimination against youth on the basis of sexual orientation. Anyone sincerely concerned with the rights of the child would agree with the findings of that report.

The summary record of the second part of the meeting appears as document E/CN.4/1994/SR.63/Add.1

Annex I

List of non-governmental organizations sponsoring the statement by the World Federation of Methodist Women, under agenda item 22

International Federation of University Women

National Council of German Women's Organizations

World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations

International Abolitionist Federation

International Council on Social Welfare

International Council of Jewish Women

Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices

International Movement for Fraternal Union Among Races and People

Associated Country Women of the World

International Association of Democratic Lawyers

International Federation of Social Workers

World Vision International

American Association of Retired Persons

World Young Women's Christian Association

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts

Medical Women's International Association

Baha'i International Community

Soroptimist International

Annex II

List of non-governmental organizations sponsoring the statement by International Catholic Child Bureau

Anti-Slavery International

Defence for Children International

International Abolitionist Federation

International Federation of Women in Legal Careers

International Federation of Social Workers

World Federation of Methodist Women

World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations

World Vision International

Caritas Internationalis